IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (currently amended) A composition comprising a plurality of carbohydrate encapsulated nanoparticles, wherein each of said carbohydrate encapsulated nanoparticles comprises a core ~~metallic~~ gold nanoparticle ~~about 4-8~~ about 4-20 nm in diameter and plurality of carbohydrate molecules attached to said core gold nanoparticle, wherein said plurality of carbohydrate molecules comprises at least 150 carbohydrate molecules.

2. (original) The composition of Claim 1 further comprising an aqueous solution, wherein said plurality of carbohydrate-encapsulated nanoparticles are present in a non-aggregated state in said aqueous solution.

3. (original) The composition of Claim 2, wherein said aqueous solution has high ionic strength.

4. (original) The composition of Claim 1, wherein said plurality of carbohydrate molecules are selected from the group consisting of: mannose molecules, mannose molecule derivatives, glucose molecules and galactose molecules.

5. (original) The composition of Claim 1, wherein said plurality of carbohydrate molecules are configured to bind a target molecule.

6. (currently amended) The composition of Claim 1, wherein said core ~~metallic~~ gold nanoparticle is about 5-7 nm in diameter.

7. (currently amended) The composition of Claim 1, wherein said core ~~metallic~~ gold nanoparticle is about 4-8 nm in diameter ~~comprises gold~~.

8. (original) The composition of Claim 1, wherein said plurality of carbohydrate molecules consists of about 150-250 carbohydrate molecules.

9. (original) The composition of Claim 1, wherein said plurality of carbohydrate molecules are thiolated.

10. (currently amended) A composition comprising a plurality of carbohydrate encapsulated nanoparticles, wherein each of said carbohydrate encapsulated nanoparticles comprises a core ~~metallic~~ gold nanoparticle and a plurality of carbohydrate molecules, wherein said plurality of carbohydrate molecules comprises at least 150 carbohydrate molecules, and wherein said plurality of carbohydrate molecules are selected from the group consisting of mannose molecules and mannose derivative molecules.

11. (cancelled)

12. (original) The composition of Claim 10, wherein said plurality of carbohydrate molecules consists of about 150-250 carbohydrate molecules.

13. (original) The composition of Claim 10 further comprising an aqueous solution, wherein said plurality of carbohydrate-encapsulated nanoparticles are present in a non-aggregated state in said aqueous solution.

14. (original) The composition of Claim 13, wherein said aqueous solution has high ionic strength.

15. (original) The composition of Claim 10, wherein said plurality of carbohydrate molecules are thiolated.

16.-20. (cancelled)